Studies in Intellectual History
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Some Problems of Intellectual History

The following remarks are made in order to bring together in one place a statement of the various problems which confront the historian of ideas from time to time. I cannot claim to have answered all the questions nor to have stated all the problems involved, but as far as one man's experience goes, these are the most frequent.

I. The first problem one has to face squarely is the problem of just what an idea is. By last count the word itself had some forty-two distinct meanings. I shall spare you the list since no one could keep it straight anyway. What I mean by an idea is something which might be asserted in a declarative statement, an assertion of belief, the solution of a problem, not necessarily one's own problem, but someone's in the last analysis. Such assertions may be statements of fact or of policy, as is obvious, and sometimes though phrased as statements of fact they may conceal statements of policy. Their truth and falsity, again obviously, do not concern the historian of ideas, but their precise meaning does.

(I) Now at this point one finds that a misconception frequently occurs. Historians of ideas are asked whether they are not engaged in what used to be called semasiology, the history of the meaning of words. That misconception can be eliminated perhaps by pointing out the following facts: (a) sometimes the
same idea is named by a variety of words. The most dramatic cases of this which occur to me are the cases of the idea of an object and the idea of egoism. If one reads seventeenth and eighteenth century books in philosophy, one will come across the words, "subjective" and "egoism." In the twentieth century these words indicate, respectively, something occurring in the mind as distinguished from something occurring in the material and external worlds, and a doctrine of morals which implies a kind of selfishness. But at the time when we first find them, the word "subjective" meant something existing in the external world, in the substratum, a descendant of Aristotle's *hypokeimenon*, and the word "egoism" meant what we call "solipsism." Now the ideas that there is an external world and that only the self exists did not change much, though theories of what the characteristics of both were have changed a good deal. Hence if one substitutes the ideas for the words and semasiology for the history of ideas, one is clearly confused. (b) Sometimes, as Mr. Lovejoy has so successfully pointed out on many occasions, the same word is used for a great variety of ideas. His classic article on the discrimination of romanticisms is a case in point, and to that we might add his appendix to our volume, *Primitivism in Antiquity*, in which he discriminated sixty-six meanings of the word "nature" and its derivatives. But we need not go to the historians for evidence of this. One has only to think of the ambiguities in the words "democracy," "progress," "Christianity," and "poetry" in contemporary discussions to see that one can never be sure that a given word is the label for a single idea.

(2) Analogous to this confusion between a word and an idea, one must point out an error which frequently is made to the effect that if a word is found, like "romanticism" or "Christianity" or "poetry," the things it names must of necessity cover
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a common meaning and that all one has to do is to collect all the things named by it and by abstraction find the common meaning, a hidden essence remaining self-identical through time and under the layers of ambiguities. I am far from sure of why this error occurs and one would imagine that at least those people who have ever come in contact with undergraduates would understand how words change their meanings sometimes to a ludicrous extent. When one receives an undergraduate report in which the word “meretricious” is confused with “meritorious” and the word “nugatory” with “highly important,” one does not usually conclude there must be a common meaning in each pair of words but rather writes a sneering comment in the margin. If, however, the undergraduates were long dead and their papers were in print and one were following the technique which I am deprecating, one would be forced to that conclusion. The proper conclusion to be made is that the words in question are ambiguous and hence stand for two or more different ideas.

Thus to take a more serious example, the fact that *Hamlet* is called a tragedy and that *The Trojan Woman* is called a tragedy does not in itself imply anything whatsoever about there being a tragic essence common to them both, though in actual fact there may be one. Similarly after the discrimination of the romanticisms made by Lovejoy, there ought to be no further discussion of what romanticism really was. There happen to have been a variety of aesthetic doctrines, some of which were logically related to others and some of which were not, all called by the same name. But that fact does not imply they all had a common essence any more than the fact that hundreds of people are called John Smith means that they are all of the same parentage. This is perhaps the most common and most misleading error arising from the confusion of ideas and words. One could speak for hours about it alone and perhaps should.
It should be observed that I am not maintaining that all names for ideas are ambiguous nor that the reasons for the ambiguity cannot be discovered.

II. We have said that an idea, as we use the term, is an assertion, a statement of fact or of policy, and that sometimes the two are intertwined in the mind of the person who holds the idea. Thus in Poe's lecture, *The Poetic Principle*, one finds the statement, "I hold that a long poem does not exist." It is clear to most people that the *Iliad* is both long and a poem and an existent poem. But it appears at once that Poe means by the word *poem* something both eulogistic and descriptive. A real poem, as distinguished from an ostensible poem to his way of thinking is a set of verses which "elevate the soul." Just what this elevation or, as he also calls it, excitement is, he never makes quite clear, but that is of small moment here. What is of moment is the actual fact that Poe for some reason or other did not use the word "poem" for poems which he disliked or of which he disapproved, as some congressmen prefer to call Americans with whose ideas they disagree un-American. Thus the normative meaning of a term is confused with the descriptive meaning. We find this confusion particularly noticeable in the fields of aesthetics and ethics and politics and religion, in other words wherever man's love and hate and fear and aspirations are concerned.

But it must also be noticed that such confusion is not peculiar to the field of ideas. The names we use to classify a variety of things are useful only in so far as things actually possess the traits implied in the generic terms. But there will always be a certain fringe of difference between what the generic term demands and what the instances exhibit. According to Aristotle this difference always was to be found in what he called the accidental, rather than the essential, traits. But the great ques-
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tion was that of determining what was essence and what accident. The distinction was easier for Aristotle than for us, because he believed in an order of Nature as opposed to a world of chance in the former of which there was no matter, a belief obscured in most historians of philosophy but nevertheless very important for an understanding of Aristotle. Accidental traits appeared in the latter of these two realms.

By analogy, Poe seems to have believed that there was a poetic essence which was perceived by what he called the “Poetic Sentiment,” which he also calls “Taste,” one of the three faculties of the soul, of which the other two were the “Reason” and the “Moral Sense.” Hence, as for Aristotle a biologist might be mistaken in identifying a certain animal or plant, so for Poe a critic might be mistaken in spotting a poem. It is strange that he did not raise the question how or why people used their reason or moral sense to discern the object of taste. We usually do not try to discriminate colors with our ears or notes with our tongues. But we must not be led astray by irrelevant if interesting problems. What the historians of ideas might profitably discuss in this context is the idea that there exists such a faculty as taste with the properties which Poe believed to inhere in it. But all that I am attempting to do here is to indicate how a program which seems at first sight to be purely descriptive contains within it a normative element of such power that its author should in all fairness assert not that he is, for instance, writing an account of what poetry is but of what it ought to be.

The idea in a case like this must be broken down into its two component parts. Part of the idea is the superiority of one kind of poetry to another. The second part is the theory that human beings possess a certain faculty called “Taste” which perceives the kind of beauty which Poe was particularly interested in. It is clear that each component part could be defended or attacked
separately, that the truth of one does not depend upon the truth
of the other, that consequently a person might believe in one
without believing in the other, and that therefore two ideas are
involved here rather than one. One can state this differently by
maintaining that Poe's idea of poetry was a complex which could
only be expressed in two logically independent statements.

One type of critic of the history of ideas will assert at this
point that Poe was not aware of all this and for all I know he
would be right. The historian of ideas is not merely occupied
with what proponents of an idea are aware of, though this of
course interests him too, but also with what is involved in the
idea by logic. This brings us to the third main point.

III. Mr. Philip Merlan recently published in the Journal of
the History of Ideas a short article on Lucretius, the burden of
which was that Lucretius was neither a primitivist nor a believer
in progress. If a primitivist be defined as a man believing that
man as he first appeared on earth or man in a state of nature—
let us leave the definition of that state alone in this place—and if
a believer in progress be defined as a man who believes that
human conditions of life are better than they used to be, it is true
that one can also believe in a doctrine that man's life is neither
better nor worse than it used to be or that civilized life is no
better nor worse than uncivilized. That was not Mr. Merlan's
thesis. On the contrary, his reason was to the effect that Lucretius
was neither primitivistic nor antiprimitivistic, "because it does
not seem that he wanted to treat the problem at all."† Let us
assume that Lucretius did not want to treat the problem. It is
nevertheless true that there appears in De Rerum Natura an
account of history which is antiprimitivistic. This account was
read by many people and influenced their thinking and indeed
may possibly have changed their minds. Similarly Poe's theory of

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poetry was presumably derived from his reading of Coleridge and Coleridge derived his from his reading of certain German philosophers. If we give to that theory a name ending in *ism*, then the German *ism* reappears in Poe whether Poe knew it or not, whether he would have liked to be known as a follower of the German philosophers or not, whether he would have given the same reasons for it as they gave or not, and so on. As for Lucretius, we do not know precisely where he found his account of history, though we can guess that he found it in writings of the Epicurean school if not in those of its founder. It would be of course of great interest to know whether Lucretius really believed in his account of progress or not, but that is irrelevant to the question of whether the passage in question is primitivistic or not. One has only to read it to see. One need know nothing of its author's intentions.

Most of the listeners to *Fidelio* and Wagner's *Ring* know little of the political background of those operas, nor was their influence on subsequent history attributable to the political ideas involved in them. As far as Wagner was concerned, he rejected them in later life. But this does not mean that these ideas were not there. Hence it is important to remember that an author's sincerity has nothing to do with the meaning of what he says and the historian of ideas must catch them where they occur. If Mr. Merlan is right, then we have an idea appearing in an author who did not believe in it; if I am right in thinking that most people do not see the politics in *Fidelio* and the *Ring*, then we have an idea which becomes ineffectual, perhaps because expressed in a medium which obscured its meaning. Most of us know, I take it, that Spenser's *Faery Queene* was an allegory, but there must be dozens of people who have read it, as I did for the first time, without any notion at all that it was anything more than a series of knightly adventures. Historians of ideas
are interested in an author's intentions in so far as the meaning of his ideas is concerned; but they are not necessarily interested in his other intentions. When a man is so ironical that his irony disappears, what he has to say obviously will be interpreted as if it were not irony.

IV. The reason for dwelling on this point is that ideas have a way of occurring in places where one would least expect them. Mr. Malcolm Cowley has written an article in the New York Herald-Tribune\(^2\) in which he made out a good case for the thesis that *The Scarlet Letter* was planned in five major episodes or acts analogous to those of a Greek tragedy. This technique, he says, was expounded by Poe some time earlier in his review of *Twice Told Tales*. Let us assume for the sake of simplicity that Mr. Cowley is right. It would be an interesting problem to discover how Hawthorne got this idea which was to appear in *Mme Bovary* and in some of the novels of Henry James and which gives them what we call their unity of action. Now that Hawthorne did apply this tragic outline for his novel is, let us say, established as a fact. But novels had been written for many generations with no novelist thinking of using it. On what basis could one have predicted that the technique would have been used in a novel written by a New England author who had so far composed, as far as most people knew, no novels? Looking backwards, it is easy enough to see that he did apply it and why a man desirous of unity should have applied it. But one has only to think of the novels which had been written before 1850 to see how original the method was. One might argue that the very nature of a novel is such that one need make no sacrifices to such unity, providing as it does the means of introducing picturesque episodes, minor characters of all sorts, comic relief, the kind of

\(^2\) August 6, 1950.
mechanical balance which one finds so often in Thackeray, the vast scenes which Dickens was fond of, and so on.

But whether one is writing a novel or a play, one is still telling a story, and that the Greek tragedy should inspire the outline of a novel may not strike my readers as forcibly as it strikes me. Let me give another example. The idea that the cosmos is a balance of determinism and freedom, of mechanism and spontaneity, is a metaphysical idea whose roots go back at least as far as Leibniz but which appeared in full flower in Schelling. But this idea also appears in another form in the aesthetic writings of the Schlegels. It occurs also in the preface to *Cromwell* and from then on seems to be a common feature of many so-called romantic novels. But aesthetically, the determined and the free appear as the sublime and the absurd. Polarization of this sort then pops up in literary criticism and we find Shakespeare praised for what Voltaire disliked so heartily in him, the disunity which is "expressed," as the Schlegels would have said, in the union of the grotesque and the serious. There is no comic relief in Greek tragedy unless as a colleague of mine once suggested, it occurs in the choruses; nor is there any in Seneca nor the French classic dramatists. I do not pretend to know why Shakespeare and his predecessors and successors went in for comic relief, but I am pretty certain that it was not for the reasons which Hugo gave.\(^3\) Nor do I see any reason whatsoever why dramas or novels or any other works of art should attempt to mirror the structure of the universe. Who could have predicted on logical grounds that a metaphysical theory would turn into an aesthetic program?

I shall give but a third example in order to save space and time. Miss Nicolson has already illustrated how science invaded the field of poetry after Newton, and indeed before. And we all

\(^3\) But see Ola E. Winslow's *Low Comedy as a Structural Element in English Drama* (Chicago, 1926), 122 ff.
know how biology invaded the field of novel-writing in Zola. I should like to indicate how science has invaded the field of painting. Mr. Alexander Dorner in his eloquent book on Herbert Bayer, *The Way beyond "Art,"* points out that Bayer’s paintings can only be appreciated if one sees in them objects in space-time, not spatial objects outside of time. Because of that one sees planes in interpenetration, with an emphasis upon the dynamic aspects of lines. It is clear that the world we see with our eyes is not that in which material objects interpenetrate. Try as we will we cannot see them thus, any more than we can walk through solid walls, whatever energy may be able to do. Hence it still appears strange to us to see the world as Bayer depicts it.

Moreover, there is no reason why a painter should feel obligated to represent matter according to physics, rather than according to eyesight. He is of course free to do anything he wishes, and I do not deny that Bayer’s paintings and drawings are a great deal more interesting and emotionally powerful than those of Alma-Tadema. But at the same time it must be granted that there exists no legislature to decree that a painter must desert the macroscopic world of vision for the microscopic world of mathematical physics. The apology for the latter will be probably that the painter is occupied with representing “reality” and “reality” will be defined as the subject matter of the physical sciences. That is pure nonsense if the unreal is defined as the realm of illusions, ghosts, hallucinations, and their like. In other words, a scientific idea has appeared in aesthetics though it has no logical relation to aesthetics, except that established by fiat. Let me repeat that what I say is not said in depreciation of Mr. Dorner or Bayer.

What this amounts to is the caution that the absence of a logical tie between an idea and its application or reinterpretation is no evidence of its absence. Metaphysical ideas may
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turn up in educational policy; political ideas may turn up in music; astronomical ideas may turn up in aesthetic theory. This, I might add, is one of those things which makes the history of ideas so highly interesting, for it illustrates the play of the human imagination in a field usually thought to be essentially foreign to imagination.

V. But none of this is intended to suggest that the historian of ideas should indulge in what Lovejoy has called mind reading. We are writing history, not psychology, and if a man is inconsistent, that fact must be noted. There is no law compelling a man to be logical and indeed one of the most noticeable facts about intellectual exercises is that the discipline of logic breaks down so frequently. Even the most famous thinkers can be shown to have been unaware of the conflicts in their thoughts. Hence it is against the rules to insist that a man must have been logically sound and that contradictions in his ideas can and must be explained away. We have a tendency to imagine that every writer has a system of philosophy into which he has succeeded in incorporating all his thoughts. Even in those cases where systematic reasoning is most pronounced, as in the case of Aristotle, there are conflicts which cannot be resolved. It would thus be self-defeating to try to discover an underlying unity in him. I do not maintain that the thinkers in question knew that they were inconsistent or that they wanted to be inconsistent. But they are frequently blind to their inconsistencies and the point at which they swerve from the path of logical exactitude is a point of the greatest interest to the historians.

Now there are two cases in contemporary historical research where another kind of mind reading is usually found. (a) In Marxist interpretation of ideological history the historian is forced to maintain that the thinker, whether he knew it or not,
is really expressing the ideas of the dominant social class or the class with which he has, often unconsciously, identified himself. Thus Newton's astrophysics turns out to have been written for the English navigators and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the cotton-mill owners of Lowell and Lawrence and Fall River. Much clever and doubtless valid work has been done in the field of the economic interpretation of history, but before one can make the correlation between a set of ideas and an economic complex, it would be necessary to know more than we do know about the aetiology of thought. Of that more later.

(b) A close associate of the Marxist is the psychoanalyst. He too has to indulge in mind reading, for he too believes that ideas are always rationalizations. The meaning of an idea for him too is something below the level of consciousness and he presumably knows how to reach that level. I have not the competence to say how valid the psychoanalytic technique is, but anyone can observe for himself that if a given idea can be proved to be either the expression of the Oedipus complex, or of the inferiority complex, or of the collective unconscious with equal force, then there is no general agreement about what it precisely is. Here again I recognize the extremely important therapeutic work of psychoanalysis and would not for a moment join those who either sneer at it or denounce it. But we are talking about a field in which its relevance has not been demonstrated. In fact, one of the results of our work might be to provide the psychoanalyst with material for his study, for before he can draw any conclusions about the relations between the unconscious and the ratiocinative processes, he must know in detail just what thoughts are present.

In other words, ideas are the beliefs of people, what they assert. They are not, as we use the term, what they would have asserted had they known what we know, or what they should have asserted
had they been consistent, or what they might have asserted had they drawn the conclusions from their premises which we would draw. So much is a matter of historiography or, if one wish, psychology, but there is also a logical fallacy which is sometimes committed by historians of ideas. It consists in arguing back from a conclusion to a supposedly necessary premise. This obviously is the fallacy of affirming the consequent of a hypothetical syllogism. For instance, an historian might argue that if a man pleaded for the rule of force, that the weaker must go to the wall and that insane asylums, hospitals, education, protection of the weak, and so on should be done away with, he must also be a Darwinian in his biological views. But that clearly is not so. For as all students of elementary logic know, a given conclusion may follow from a variety of premises.

VI. We come now to a question which is still a matter of dispute but upon which an historian must take a stand. That is the question both of the efficacy and aetiology of ideas. The two popular theories of Marxism and psychoanalysis both agree in denying that ideas as such have any efficacy to speak of—the qualification is necessary in both cases—and that the causes lie below the threshold of consciousness or else in the material world. The historian of ideas, while he need not overlook the nonideal and nonconscious causes and effects, for that matter, of ideas is confined to the realm of asserted beliefs and his problem must in the very nature of study be confined to that field. His universe of discourse is bounded by what men are aware of asserting, though they may not be aware of why they assert what they do assert. It is no refutation of their findings to maintain that they have not told the whole story; no one ever has or could tell the whole story about anything.

There is, for instance, a famous passage in the *Origin of Species* in which Darwin correlates the amount of honey produced in a
region with the number of spinsters living there, by pointing out that the greatest enemy of the honey bee is the field mouse, the greatest enemy of the field mouse the domestic cat, and the greatest protector of the domestic cat we might add the spinster. But one has yet to find an entomologist who would feel that he must include a study of celibacy in his studies of honey bees, though he perhaps ought to do so to tell the whole story. The historian of ideas might very well feel that he was presenting to the psychologist and to the economic historian materials for further investigation, neither asserting nor denying the relation of ideas to anything else in the universe.

But within the field of consciously asserted belief, there are questions which the historian cannot overlook. Is it true, for instance, that all ideas are linked logically, and that what is usually called influence can be traced exclusively through logical relations? This does not seem to be so even in the field of philosophy where logical deductions are so heavily accentuated. There are cases where a man's pupils or successors seem to have perceived in his writings and to have drawn out of them implications which he himself did not perceive. But there are two sets of beliefs which could not be derived in this way. They include the choice of premises and the perception of problems. The choice of premises, we know, is logically unmotivated, by which I mean that they cannot by their nature be logically demonstrated. That is why they are called premises. This is so old a story that there is no need of dwelling upon it here. But the perception of a problem is somewhat different and has not received the notices which it deserves. Almost all thinkers have noted exceptions to the rules which they have elaborated but have had a tendency to explain them away. As we have said, even Aristotle realized that the world below the moon was full of eccentricities. Things were not as they should be. But he
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explained such deviations from the norm as due to the presence of matter. A new scientific theory often arises when a man refuses to explain away such deviations from the norm and looks for a more general formula which will include them. It will be observed that the drive towards greater and greater generalization in science accompanies, as indeed it must, a similar development in language. And one of the causes of new ideas must surely be the possession of abstract terms in which to express the higher degree of abstraction which increasing generalization demands.

In the field of literature, as in all the arts, this factor in intellectual history has caused no end of trouble. For here we are in a field where human invention plays its part and the student is not simply perceiving exceptions to the rules, but these exceptions are being created by writers and other artists. Thus we start, so to speak, with a vocabulary developed by certain Greek and Roman writers to describe, let us say, the literature which they were acquainted with, a very limited literature indeed. That vocabulary having been fixed and made common to all scholars is used to describe literary works made by people who were neither Greeks nor Romans. Moreover, these people, innocent of the demand to be faithful to antiquity, have invented styles of writing and composition which the ancient terminology does not adequately describe. Yet it seems to be presupposed that it must adequately describe them. Hence the drive is towards the unification of all literatures and the discovery of an essence common to them all and identical with that found in the most ancient of them. To put the matter more simply, Shakespeare's plays are not called tragedies or comedies in order to show that they conformed to the prescriptions of Aristotle, but got these names simply from historical sources, and though ingenious work has been done by literary critics and aestheticians to demonstrate

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a common essence in all tragedies and comedies, the results have been sound only to the extent that the critics and aestheticians have eliminated from their subject matters precisely those details which located them in their historical setting. But the historian who abandons the world of time for that of eternity is turning his back on history and his face towards science—either sociology, psychology, metaphysics, or what you will. One could conceivably show what *Hamlet* has in common with Sophocles's *Antigone*—or for that matter with *Mourning becomes Electra*—and I do not deny that such studies might have their interest. But if one wants to study *Hamlet*, one must recognize its place in the space-time order.

*Hamlet* is not an idea but a play. And no idea is so completely particularized. For even if I should think, which I don't, that George Washington was dominated by the desire to make money speculating in federal lands, an idea which is pretty specific and which need not apply to any revolutionary hero other than Washington, yet since Washington left no document confessing his motives, we should have to demonstrate our point by more general ideas of which Washington was an example. But most ideas of which we study the history do have a date and a certain peculiar relevance to a place. Their meaning is colored by their historical setting. I should think this to be true of Plato's ideas about politics and Aristotle's about poetry, to take but two examples. The extent to which they were talking to us of whom they could have known nothing, is certainly very limited except in one of those metaphysical senses which drive some philosophers to desperation. We shall not elaborate this point now, but the peculiar thing about ideas is that though they do arise within a definite historical setting, they seem to have relevance to points beyond their setting. This is the anomaly of knowledge of which Lovejoy has made so much. The relevance, however, never goes
into the future except by accident. It extends well beyond the thinker in space and into the past and indeed he thinks frequently that he is a prophet too. But it is precisely because he cannot foretell the amazing things which are going to happen to upset all his generalizations that his prophecies are so bad. To illustrate this with a concrete example, if Plato thought of a state as a city-state with only a few thousand inhabitants, what he had to say about politics can apply to a state occupying millions of square miles and inhabited by millions of people only by so great a loss of particularity that it loses all sense. He was to be sure talking about men, women, and children, and one can make a fine show of his universality. But it is not mankind which interests the historian; it is men, and that means that the differences between people are more important than their similarities.

This is particularly important for the historian of ideas, for one of his problems is precisely that of why a given thought takes on new meaning as time moves on. If a given idea were eternal, it would have no history. The Pythagorean theorem cannot be said to have had a history except in the sense that it was discovered at a given date by someone and was perhaps used in a variety of ways after its discovery. But the idea that mankind is a debased and miserable creature, conceived in sin and doomed to damnation, was not only discovered at a certain date by someone, but acquired new relevance as western European history went on. For the idea of what was sin changed, and so did the idea of who was responsible and who not, and so did the notion of responsibility, and hence the notion of punishment and its kinds and degrees, and hence the question of obedience to law both human and divine, and so on. Such is its situation in the historical sequence, and its logical relations to other ideas are but a small part of what the historian must consider. The Greeks, in spite of the myth of Prometheus, never developed, as
far as I know, any theory of infant damnation. Yet logically it could have been inferred from the Titan's creation of man out of clay, since the Prometheus legend includes the jealousy of Zeus, and the punishment for the bestowing of fire on mankind. But no Greek who has survived left us any doctrine of human depravity, though there are doctrines of human degeneration, and all forms of chronological primitivism involve something analogous to the Fall.

It must be at least tentatively concluded that we actually do not have a satisfactory explanation of the cause and effects of ideas. But we can trace their rise and spread and their mutations in some detail. We cannot then say either that no man draws the logical consequences out of the ideas of his predecessors nor that all men do. In the history of science it is pretty well recognized that the initiation of hypotheses is still an unknown and that something vaguely called the creative imagination has to be called upon to explain it. It is, of course, no explanation at all. It is likely that the same applies to the formation of all ideas. But that to be sure leaves us in no worse plight than that in which any other kind of historian finds himself when he is dealing with particulars. For no individual event or thing is explicable except in so far as it is a fair sample of a class. The historian would like to win the prestige which accrues to the scientist these days and therefore would like to have general laws, no matter how empty of content in terms of which he might phrase his data and his conclusions. But I am maintaining that though it would be absurd to assert dogmatically the impossibility of constructing a sociology or anthropology on the analogy of physical science, such a discipline would be quite different from history, as I am using the term here. It would be as different as biography is from psychobiology, or portraiture from physiognomonics. The banal French saying that there are no sicknesses,
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there are only sick people, is an illustration of the same point. When one is dealing with particulars one will always find a gap between the law and its exemplification. Just as every man has his own way of catching cold, so every nation has its own way of making war, and every philosopher his own way of handling an idea. If the question be raised why we call the diseases colds, and the disturbances war, and the ideas by an equally abstract name, the answer is that if we are going to talk about things at all, we have to use common nouns and adjectives.

VII. Conclusion. What I have tried to do in this paper is to point out some of the peculiarities of historiography and to indicate some of its problems in so far as they pertain to the history of ideas. Many of these things have been already adequately treated by Lovejoy whose essays in this field and whose book, The Great Chain of Being, have established a model for such research. The two most frequent criticisms of him and his colleagues have been (1) that no one actually ever thought as the historian says he thought, and (2) where it is a case of literature, the history of ideas leaves literary value out of account. As for the first point, an historian is not writing psychology; and as for the second, he is not writing literary criticism or aesthetics. Nor had he, when he is in his right mind, any intention of doing either. We know too much about the influence of unconscious motivation on ideas to deny it, but that does not mean that a study of the development of the effect implies a denial of its having been caused. Similarly the fact that a novel or poem has great aesthetic value does not imply that it either has or does not have something to say. To discover German post-Kantian philosophy or traces of Neo-Platonism in Wordsworth or Emerson is to say nothing whatsoever about anything else which may be there, nor does such a discovery imply that either poet was or was not aware of the literary sources of what he was saying.